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Local Legislation.

TEN HOUR SYSTEM.

REPORT

ON

THE FACTORY SYSTEM

OF

MASSACHUSETTS.

LOCAL LEGISLATION.

TEN HOUR SYSTEM.

Our attention has been called to a bill before the Legislature at Harrisburg, to regulate the hours of labour in this commonwealth, and we have taken some pains to inquire of manufacturers and others how it would affect them and the labouring classes.

One manufacturer informed us, that as to their working a less number of hours in their mills, without a reduction of wages, was out of the question. That if the law was passed, they should work by the hour, and as the law proposed embraces a penalty for the employment of children over ten hours within the twenty-four, no children would be employed by them, and the burden of their support would fall upon their parents, many of whom had large families, with children of sixteen, fourteen, and twelve years of age, who are now earning for them from \$3 to \$1.50 per week, and these would be thrown entirely out of employment, and the parents alone, and unassisted by a large and growing family, would have to support and bring them up.

Another manufacturer of whom we made particular inquiry on this subject, told us that he had never known children of tender age, as the memorialists say, "worked in confined rooms until they were scarcely able to stand." The time of working in his mills averaged about eleven and a-half hours per day, and not so much for the children, and as a general rule, the men in his mills, and in all the mills within his knowledge, worked fewer hours than their employers; that while his men worked eleven and a-half hours per day, he always worked himself sixteen hours, that he considered his workmen better paid than he was, that he employed at this time about fifty men, women, and children; and if such a bill should pass the House, he should pay all his people by the hour, and discharge all the children, who, being under age, could not make a legal bargain for themselves.

The idea that a manufacturer in the State of Pennsylvania can run his mills but ten hours per day, and compete in the market with all the other states of the Union, running twelve hours, cannot for a moment be entertained,—and it forces the manufacturers to make especial arrangements with their hands.

Again, how are the Iron Furnaces to run with this legal prohibition of working only ten hours per day, when it is absolutely necessary that they should work all the time, day and night, when in blast? And no law can be passed which will not give the manufacturers and the Iron men in particular, a vast deal of vexation and trouble, and which will operate with tenfold severity on the poor man who has a large family to support.

We could extend our remarks much farther, but prefer soliciting the attention of the reader to the truthful and intelligent report of the special committee of the Massachusetts Legislature on the same subject, in 1845, which will repay an attentive reading by the members of our Legislature, and by the workmen themselves.

TRUTH.

Philadelphia, February 17, 1848.

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THE FACTORY SYSTEM OF MASSACHUSETTS.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE TEN HOUR SYSTEM.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts, }
House of Representatives, March 12, 1845. {

The Special Committee, to which was referred sundry petitions relating to the hours of labour, have considered the same, and submit the following

REPORT.

The first petition which was referred to your committee, came from the city of Lowell, and was signed by Mr. John Quincy Adams Thayer, and eight hundred and fifty others, "peaceable, industrious, hard-working men and women of Lowell." The petitioners declare that they are confined "from thirteen to fourteen hours per day in unhealthy apartments," and are, thereby, "hastening, through pain, disease, and privation, down to a premature grave." They, therefore, ask the Legislature "to pass a law providing that ten hours shall constitute a day's work," and that no corporation or private citizen "shall be allowed, except in cases of emergency, to employ one set of hands more than ten hours per day."

The second petition came from the town of Fall River, and is signed by John Gregory, and four hundred and eighty-eight others. These petitioners ask for the passage of a law to constitute "ten hours a day's work in all corporations created by the Legislature."

The third petition, signed by Samuel W. Clark, and five hundred others, citizens of Andover, is in precisely the same words as the one from Fall River.

The fourth petition is from Lowell, and is signed by James Carle, and three hundred others. The petitioners ask for the enactment of a law making ten hours a day's work, where no specific agreement is entered into between the parties.

The whole number of names on the several petitions is 2,139, of which 1,151 are from Lowell. A very large proportion of the Lowell petitioners are females. Nearly one-half of the Andover petitioners are females. The petition from Fall River is signed exclusively by males.

In view of the number and respectability of the petitioners who had brought their grievances before the Legislature, the Committee asked for and obtained leave of the House to send for "persons and papers," in order that they might enter into an examination of the matter, and report the result of their examination to the Legislature, as a basis for legislative action, should any be deemed necessary.

On the 13th of February, the Committee held a session to hear the

petitioners from the city of Lowell. Six of the female, and three of the male petitioners were present, and gave in their testimony.

The first petitioner who testified, was ELIZA R. HEMMINGWAY. She had worked two years and nine months in the Lowell Factories; two years in the Middlesex, and nine months in the Hamilton Corporations. Her employment is weaving—works by the piece. The Hamilton Mill manufactures cotton fabrics. The Middlesex, woollen fabrics. She is now at work in the Middlesex Mills, and attends one loom. Her wages average from \$16 to \$23 a month, exclusive of board.* She complained of the hours for labour being too many, and the time for meals too limited. In the summer season, the work is commenced at 5 o'clock, A. M., and continued till 7 o'clock, P. M., with half an hour for breakfast, and three quarters of an hour for dinner. During the eight months of the year, but half an hour is allowed for dinner. The air in the room she considered not to be wholesome. There were 293 small lamps, and 61 large lamps lighted in the room in which she worked, when evening work is required. These lamps are also lighted sometimes in the morning. About 130 females, 11 men, and 12 children, (between the ages of 11 and 14,) work in the room with her. She thought the children enjoyed about as good health as children generally do. The children work but 9 months out of 12. The other 3 months they must attend school. Thinks that there is no day when there are less than six of the females out of the mill from sickness. Has known as many as thirty. She, herself, is out quite often on account of sickness. There was more sickness in the summer than in the winter months; though in the summer lamps are not lighted. She thought there was a general desire among the females to work but ten hours, regardless of pay. Most of the girls are from the country who work in the Lowell Mills. The average time which they remain there is about three years. She knew one girl who had worked there 14 years. Her health was poor when she left. Miss Hemmingway said her health was better where she now worked, than it was when she worked in the Hamilton Corporation. She knew of one girl who last winter went into the mill at half past 4 o'clock, A. M., and worked till half-past 7 o'clock, P. M. She did so to make more money. She earned from \$25 to \$30 per month. There is always a large number of girls at the gate wishing to get in before the bell rings. On the Middlesex Corporation, one-fourth part of the females go into the mill before they are obliged to. They do this to make more wages. A large number come to Lowell to make money to aid their parents who are poor. She knew of many cases where married women came to Lowell and worked in the mills to assist their husbands to pay for their farms. The moral character of the operatives is good. There was only one American female in the room with her who could not write her name.

Miss SARAH G. BAGLEY said she had worked in the Lowell Mills eight years and a half—six years and a half on the Hamilton Corpora-

* This is said to have been a mistake. It should have read inclusive of board. It read exclusive on the minutes of the Committee, and was so understood by every member.—[Ed. Courier.]

tion, and two years on the Middlesex. She is a weaver, and works by the piece. She worked in the mills three years before her health began to fail. She is a native of New Hampshire, and went home six weeks during the summer. Last year she was out of the mill a third of the time. She thinks the health of the operatives is not so good as the health of females who do housework or millinery business. The chief evil, so far as health is concerned, is the shortness of time allowed for meals. The next evil is the length of time employed—not giving them time to cultivate their minds. She spoke of the high moral and intellectual character of the girls. That many were engaged as teachers in the Sunday schools. That many attended the lectures of the Lowell Institute, and she thought if more time was allowed, that more lectures would be given and more girls attend. She thought that the girls generally were favourable to the ten hour system. She had presented a petition, same as the one before the committee, to 132 girls, most of whom said that they would prefer to work but ten hours. In a pecuniary point of view it would be better, as their health would be improved. They would have more time for sewing. Their intellectual, moral, and religious habits, would also be benefited by the change. Miss Bagley said, in addition to her labour in the mills, she had kept evening school during the winter months, for four years, and thought this extra labour must have injured her health.

Miss JUDITH PAYNE testified that she came to Lowell 16 years ago, and worked a year and a half in the Merrimack cotton mills; left there on account of ill health, and remained out over seven years. She was sick most of the time she was out. Seven years ago she went to work in the Boott mills, and has remained there ever since—works by the piece. She has lost, during the last seven years, about one year from ill health. She is a weaver, and attends three looms. Last pay-day she drew \$14,66 for five weeks' work—this was exclusive of board; she was absent, during the five weeks, but half a day. She says there is a very general feeling in favour of the ten hour system among the operatives. She attributes her ill health to the long hours of labour, the shortness of time for meals, and the bad air of the mills. She had never spoken to Mr. French, the agent, or to the overseer of her room, in relation to these matters. She could not say that more operatives died in Lowell than any other people.

Miss OLIVE J. CLARK—She is employed on the Lawrence Corporation; has been there five years; makes about \$1,62½ per week, exclusive of board; she has been home to New Hampshire to school; her health never was good. The work is not laborious; can sit down about a quarter of the time. About fifty girls work in the spinning room with her, three of whom signed the petition. She is in favour of the ten hour system, and thinks that the long hours had an effect upon her health. She is kindly treated by her employers. There is hardly a week in which there is not some one out on account of sickness; thinks the air is bad on account of the small particles of cotton which fly about. She has never spoken with the agent or overseer about working only ten hours.

Miss CELICIA PHILLIPS, has worked four years in Lowell. Her testimony was similar to that given by Miss Clark.

Miss ELIZABETH ROWE has worked in Lowell 16 months, all the time on the Lawrence Corporation; came from Maine; she is a weaver; works by the piece; runs four looms. "My health," she says, "has been very good, indeed, since I worked there; averaged \$3.00 a week since I have been there, besides my board; have heard very little about the hours of labour being too long." She consented to have her name put on the petition because Miss Phillips asked her to. She would prefer to work only ten hours. Between 50 and 60 work in the room with her. Her room is better ventilated, and more healthy than most others. Girls who wish to attend lectures, can go out before the bell rings; my overseer lets them go; also Saturdays they go out before the bell rings. It was her wish to attend four looms. She has a sister who has worked in the mill seven years. Her health is very good. Don't know that she has ever been out on account of sickness. The general health of the operatives is good. Have never spoken to my employers about the work being too hard, or the hours too long. Don't know any one who has been hastened to a premature grave by factory labour. I never attended any of the lectures in Lowell on the ten hour system. Nearly all the female operatives in Lowell work by the piece; and of the petitioners who appeared before the Committee, Miss Hemmingway, Miss Bagley, Miss Payne, and Miss Rowe, work by the piece, and Miss Clark and Miss Phillips by the week.

Mr. GILMAN GALE, a member of the City Council, and who keeps a provision store, testified that the short time allowed for meals he thought the greatest evil. He spoke highly of the character of the operatives, and of the agents; also of the boarding-houses, and the public schools. He had two children in the mills who enjoyed good health. The mills are kept as clean, and as well ventilated as it is possible for them to be.

Mr. HERMAN ABBOTT had worked on the Lawrence Corporation thirteen years—never heard much complaint among the girls about the long hours; never heard the subject spoken of in the mills—does not think it would be satisfactory to the girls to work only ten hours, if their wages were to be reduced in proportion. Forty-two girls work in the room with him. The girls often get back to the gate before the bell rings.

Mr. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS THAYER has lived in Lowell four years, "works at physical labour in the summer season, and mental labour in the winter." Has worked in the big machine shop twenty-four months, off and on; never worked in a cotton or woollen mill; thinks that the mechanics in the machine shop are not so healthy as in other shops, nor so intelligent as the other classes in Lowell. He drafted the petition; has heard many complain of the long hours.

Mr. S. P. ADAMS, a member of the House from Lowell, said he worked in the machine shop, and the men were as intelligent as any other class, and enjoyed as good health as any person who worked indoors; the air in the shop is as good as in any shop; about 350 hands work there, about half a dozen of whom are what is called ten hour men; they all would be ten hour men if they could get as good pay.

The only witnesses whom the committee examined, whose names

were not on the petition, were Mr. Adams and Mr. Isaac Cooper, a member of the House from Lowell, and who has worked as an overseer in the Lawrence cotton mills for nine years: his evidence was very full: he gave it as his opinion that the girls in the mills enjoy the best health, for the reason that they rise early, go to bed early, and have their meals regular. In his room there are 60 girls, and since 1837, has known only one girl that has went home from Lowell and died. He does not find that those who stay the longest in the mill grow sickly and weak. The rooms are heated by steam pipes, and the temperature of the rooms is regulated by a thermometer. It is so, he believes, in all the mills. The heat of the room varies from 62 to 68 degrees.

During our short stay in Lowell, we gathered many facts, which we deem of sufficient importance to state in this report; and first, in relation to the

HOURS OF LABOUR.

From Mr. Clark, the agent of the Merrimack Corporation, we obtained the following table of the time which the mills run during the year:

Begin Work—From 1st of May to the 31st of August, at 5 o'clock. From 1st of September to the 30th of April, as soon as they can see.

Breakfast—From 1st of November to 28th of February, before going to work. From 1st of March to 31st of March, at 7½ o'clock. From 1st of April to 10th of September, at 7 o'clock. From 20th of September to 31st of October, 7½ o'clock. Return in half an hour.

Dinner.—Through the year at 12½ o'clock. From 1st of May to 31st of August, return in 45 minutes. From 1st September to 30th of April, return in 30 minutes.

Quit Work—From 1st of May to 31st of August, at 7 o'clock. From 1st of September to 19th of September, at dark. From 20th of September to 19th of March, at 7½ o'clock. From 20th of March to 30th of April, at dark.

Lamps are never lighted on Saturday evenings. The above is the time which is kept in all the mills in Lowell, with a slight difference in the machine shop; and it makes the average daily time, throughout the year of running the mills, to be twelve hours and ten minutes.

There are four days in the year which are observed as holidays, and on which the mills are never put in motion. These are Fast Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas. These make one day more than is usually devoted to pastime in any other place in New England. The following table shows the average hours of work per day, throughout the year in the Lowell Mills:—

	Hours, Min.			Hours, Min.	
January,	11	24	July,	12	45
February,	12	—	August,	12	45
March,*	11	52	September,	12	23
April,	13	31	October, ,	12	10
May,	12	45	November,	11	56
June,	12	45	December,	11	24

* The hours of labour on the 1st of March are less than in February, even though the days are a little longer, because 30 minutes are allowed for breakfast from the 1st of March to the 1st of September.

In Great Britain, the hours of labour per week are limited by act of Parliament to 69, or $11\frac{1}{2}$ hours per day, but the general regulation in all the factories is 9 hours on Saturday, and 12 hours on each of the other five working days. It is also enacted that there shall be six holidays in the course of the year.

It is hardly possible to draw a comparison between the operatives in Great Britain and those in Lowell. The one is a manufacturing population, in the strict sense of the word, the other is not. There, the whole family go into the mill as soon as they have sufficient bodily strength to earn a penny. They never come out until they die. Very little attention is paid to their moral or physical culture, and, as has been proved by facts ascertained by commissioners appointed by Parliament, few can read or write, and unless they have attended Sabbath schools, few obtain any knowledge of the Bible, or of the Christian religion.

In Lowell, but very few (in some mills none at all) enter into the factories under the age of fifteen. None under that age can be admitted, unless they bring a certificate from the school teacher, that he or she has attended school at least three months during the preceding twelve; Nine-tenths of the factory population in Lowell come from the country. They are farmers' daughters. Many of them come over a hundred miles to enter the mills. Their education has been attended to in the district schools, which are dotted like diamonds over every square mile of New England. Their moral and religious characters have been formed by pious parents, under the paternal roof. Their bodies have been developed and their constitutions made strong by the pure air, wholesome food, and youthful exercise.

After an absence of a few years, having laid by a few hundred dollars, they depart for their homes, get married, settle down in life, and become the heads of families. Such, we believe, in truth, to be a correct statement of the Lowell operatives, and of the hours of labour.

GENERAL HEALTH OF THE OPERATIVES.

In regard to the health of the operatives employed in the mills, your Committee believe it to be good. The testimony of the female petitioners does not controvert this position, in general, though it does in particular instances. The population of the city of Lowell is now rising 26,000, of which number about 7,000 are females employed in the mills. It is the opinion of Dr. Kimball, an eminent physician of Lowell, with whom the Committee had an interview, that there is less sickness among the persons at work in the mills, than there is among those who do not work in the mills; and that there is less sickness now than there was several years ago, when the number was much less than at present. This we understood to be also the opinion of the city physician, Dr. Wells, from whose published report for the present year, we learn that the whole number of deaths in Lowell, during the year 1844, was 362, of which number 200 were children under ten years of age.

The following table shows the comparative mortality in Lowell during the past five years, enumerating some of the principal diseases.

Diseases.	1840	1841	1842	1843	1844
Consumption	40	54	70	73	77
Inflammation of Lungs	17	20	38	16	24
Cholera Infantum	12	30	34	27	31
Scarlet Fever	7	43	32	6	3
Measles	0	4	12	0	10
Dysentery	47	18	17	11	2
Inflammation of Brain	7	11	6	8	4
Croup	7	10	12	6	11
Total mortality each year,	426	456	473	363	362

The population of Lowell, in May, 1840, was 7,341 males and 13,740 females—total, 21,081. The population in May, 1844, was 7,432 males, 15,637, females—total, 25,163, increase of population in four years, 4,182. Notwithstanding this increase of population, the number of deaths has decreased. There being fewer the past year than in any of the four preceding years, and 64 less in 1844 than in 1840. Yet, during the past year, the mills have been in more active operation than during either of the four years preceding. The decrease in the mortality of Lowell, Dr. Wells attributes, in part, to “the enlightened policy of the city government, in directing the construction of common sewers, and the enterprise of individuals, in multiplying comfortable habitations, the establishment of a hospital, supported by the liberality of the corporations, for the accommodation of the sick in their employ. The more general diffusion of a knowledge of the laws of health, is also conducive to the same end.

The petitioners thought that the statements made by our city physician, as to the number of deaths, were delusive, inasmuch as many of the females, when taken sick in Lowell, do not stay there, but return to their homes in the country and die. Dr. Kimball thought that the number who return home when seized with sickness was small. Mr. Cooper, whose testimony we have given, and who is a gentleman of great experience, says that he has known but one girl who, during the last eight years, went home from Lowell and died. We have no doubt, however, that many of the operatives do leave Lowell and return to their homes when their health is feeble, but the proportion is not large. Certainly it has created no alarm, for the sisters and acquaintances of those who have gone home return to Lowell to supply the vacancies which their absence had created.

In the year 1841, Mr. French, the agent of the Boott mills, adopted a mode of ascertaining from the females employed in that mill the effect which factory labour had upon their health. The questions which he put were:—

“What is your age?”

“How long have you worked in a cotton mill?”

“Is your health as good as before?”

These questions were addressed to every female in “No. 2, Boott Mill.” The committee have the names of the females interrogated, and the answers which they returned, and the result is as follows:—

LIST OF GIRLS IN BOOTT MILL, No. 2, MAY 1, 1841.

Where employed.	Whole No. of Girls.	Average Age.		Average time employed in a Mill.	Effect upon health.		
		Y.	D.		Imp'd	As good.	Not as good.
Carding room	20	23	30	5 25	3	12	5
Spinning "	47	28	38	4 10	14	29	4
Dressing "	25	26	60	7 25	2	16	7
Weaving "	111	22	98	3 84	10	62	39
Whole No.	203	22	85	4 29	29	119	55

To these questions, several of the girls appended remarks. One girl, S. Middleton, had worked in a mill nine years. She says, "health quite as good; has not been sick in the time." Miss Proctor says, "have worked fourteen years; health a great deal better; sick when out of the mill." Miss Lawrence says, "have been five years in a mill; health quite as good; not a day's sickness in the time." Miss Clark says, "have been seventeen years in the mill; health quite as good; hasn't hurt her a mite." The Boott Mill employs nine hundred girls, not half a dozen of whom are under fifteen years of age.

In addition to which we have been permitted to copy the following memoranda, kept by John Clark, Esq., agent of the Merrimack mills:—

May 6th, 1841. "I have ascertained, by inquiries this day, that 124 of the females now at work in the Merrimack mills have heretofore taught school; and that in addition 25 or 30 have left within the last 30 days to engage their schools for the summer, making in all 150 or more. I also find, by inquiries at our boarding-houses, that 290 of our girls attended school during the evenings of the last winter."

January 1st, 1842.—"We have this day in our five mills 40 females, including sweepers, and other day hands, who cannot write their names; of this number, 30 are Irish. The average wages of 20 job hands of the above, as compared with the same number of the best writers in the same rooms, is over 18 per cent. below them. All our weavers sign their names, except four, in No. 4, upper room."

February 26, 1842.—"We have this day in our five mills, 50 foreigners, 37 are Irish, (including 15 sweepers,) 10 English, and three Scotch, and not one hand in all our works, under fifteen years of age, either male or female.—Usual number of hands employed by the Merrimack Company in their five mills is about 1200 females and three hundred males."

There are many interesting facts connected with this inquiry which your Committee have not included in the foregoing remarks, and which we could not include without making our report of too voluminous a character.

We will state, however, in this connexion, that the evidence which we obtained from gentlemen connected with the Lowell Mills all goes to prove that the more intelligent and moral the operatives are, the more valuable they are to the employers, and the greater will be the amount of their earnings.

Your Committee have not been able to give the petitioners from the

other towns in this state a hearing. We believed that the whole case was covered by the petition from Lowell, and to that petition we have given our undivided attention, and we have come to the conclusion unanimously, that legislation is not necessary at the present time, and for the following reasons:—

1st. That a law limiting the hours of labour, if enacted at all, should be of a general nature. That it should apply to individuals or co-partnerships as well as to corporations. Because, if it is wrong to labour more than ten hours in a corporation, it is also wrong when applied to individual employers, and your committee are not aware that more complaint can justly be made against incorporated companies in regard to the hours of labour, than can be against individuals or co-partnerships. But it will be said in reply to this, that corporations are the creatures of the Legislature; and, therefore, the Legislature can control them in this, as in other matters. This, to a certain extent, is true, but your committee go farther than this, and say, that not only are corporations subject to the control of the Legislature, but individuals are also, and if it should ever appear that the public morals, the physical condition, or the social well-being of society were endangered, from this cause or from any cause, then it would be in the power, and it would be the duty of the Legislature to interpose its prerogative to avert the evil.

2d. Your committee believe that the factory system, as it is called, is not more injurious to health than other kinds of in-door labour. That a law which would compel all the factories in Massachusetts to run their machinery but ten hours out of the twenty-four, while those in Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and other states in the Union, were not restricted at all, the effect would be to close the gate of every mill in the state. It would be the same as closing our mills one day in every week, and although Massachusetts capital, enterprise and industry are willing to compete on fair terms with the same of other states, and, if needs be, with European nations, yet it is easy to perceive that we could not compete with our sister states, much less with foreign countries, if a restriction of this nature was put upon our manufactories.

3d. It would be impossible to legislate to restrict the hours of labour, without affecting very materially the question of wages; and that is a matter which experience has taught us can be much better regulated by the parties themselves than by the Legislature. Labour in Massachusetts is a very different commodity from what it is in foreign countries. Here labour is on an equality with capital, and indeed controls it, and so it ever will be while free education and free institutions exist. And although we may find fault, and say that labour works too many hours, and labour is too severely tasked, yet if we attempt by legislation to enter within its orbit, and interfere with its plans, we will be told to keep clear and mind our own business. Labour is intelligent enough to make its own bargains, and look out for its own interests without any interference from us; and your committee want no better proof to convince them that Massachusetts men and Massachusetts women, are equal to this, and will take care of themselves

better than we can take care of them, than we had from the intelligent and virtuous men and women who appeared in support of this petition, before the committee.

4th. The committee do not wish to be understood as conveying the impression, that there are no abuses in the present system of labour; we think there are abuses; we think that many improvements may be made, and we believe will be made, by which labour will not be severely tasked as it now is. We think that it would be better if the hours for labour were less—if more time was allowed for meals, if more attention was paid to ventilation and pure air in our manufactories and work-shops, and many other matters. We acknowledge all this, but we say the remedy is not with us. We look for it in the progressive improvement in arts and science, in a higher appreciation of man's destiny, in a less love for money, and a more ardent love for social happiness and intellectual superiority. Your committee, therefore, while they agree with the petitioners in their desire to lessen the burdens imposed upon labour, differ only as to the means by which these burdens are sought to be removed.

WILLIAM SCHAULER, *Chairman.*